

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

**Fourteenth District, Michigan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus**

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**CONYERS CALLS ON LOTT TO RESIGN:
“HE HAS LOST HIS CREDIBILITY ON CIVIL RIGHTS”**

Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee and Dean of the Congressional Black Caucus sent the following letter today to Republican Leader, Trent Lott calling for his resignation.

December 11, 2002

The Honorable Trent Lott
Republican Leader
S-230 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Lott:

I was astonished by your remarks at last week’s birthday reception for Senator Thurmond. You claimed that the country would have been better off, and “wouldn’t have had all of those problems,” if other states had followed Mississippi and had supported the Dixiecrat Party ticket in the 1948 presidential election. Your callous comments were incredibly insulting, and outrageous for any American to make – let alone the prospective Senate Majority Leader. The recent revelation of your similar endorsement, during the 1980 elections, of Senator Thurmond’s Dixiecrat campaign is a chilling confirmation that your remarks last week were not a spontaneous slip of the tongue.

President Bush and the Congress currently seek to promote patriotism and to explain America’s basic values to the world. Especially at such a time, your remarks are so un-American that they disqualify you from continuing as the Majority Leader of the United States Senate therefore, I must call on you to resign.

I realize you have apologized to anyone whom you might have offended through “a poor choice of words.” That only compounds your slap in the face of all African Americans. Even after you had seen how much you had upset the public, you did not disavow what the Dixiecrat Party stood for. Whatever your choice of words, the plain intent was clear. The Dixiecrat Party’s agenda was to preserve segregated schools, segregated public facilities, and segregated armed forces, and to prevent African-Americans from voting.

Were you suggesting that America would have been better off if President Truman had not desegregated the armed forces? Were you suggesting that America would have been better off if the Nation’s modern the civil rights legislation had been blocked – if we had no Voting Rights Act, no Civil Rights Act of 1964, no Fair Housing Act and no African-American elected officials in Mississippi?

Even worse, your limited acknowledgment that only some people might have been offended by your remarks portrayed gross insensitivity to millions of Americans.

In addition, a key question for the 108th Congress is whether civil rights laws will be enforced and strengthened, or whether attempts will be made to undermine them. You no longer have credibility on this crucial issue.

Yours truly,

John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member